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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/19/08

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(1) Verification of SDF Iraq dispatch: Japan-U.S. honeymoon clouded over, with no prospects in sight for international contributions

ASAHI (Page 3) (Abridged)  
December 19, 2008

"This means the end of an era." A senior Foreign Ministry official made this comment yesterday on the withdrawal of Self-Defense Force troops from Iraq.

Although the world was divided over the Iraq war, former Prime

Minister Koizumi quickly expressed his support for the war and won U.S. President Bush's faith. Motohiro Ono, a senior researcher at the Middle East Research Committee, said: "First and foremost, the SDF dispatch means Japan's cooperation with the U.S. Looking back on the days of the Koizumi administration, this was extremely significant as leverage toward the U.S." Diplomatic officials believe that this gave more leeway to Japan's diplomacy.

Japan's diplomacy toward North Korea can be cited as a typical case. Koizumi made two visits to North Korea without prior in-depth coordination with the U.S. A senior Foreign Ministry official said: "He was able to do so because President Bush totally trusted what Prime Minister Koizumi did."

But the situation has completely changed. Many in Japan are dissatisfied at Washington's delisting of North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism in defiance of Japan's opposition. Prime Minister Aso also used the expression "discontent" in reaction to the U.S. move. A senior Foreign Ministry official said: "We believed that Japan's contribution in Iraq ushered Japan-U.S. relations into a new phase, but it might have been a bubble age."

The SDF's dispatch to Iraq was its first wartime mission on the front. Its operations in that country have left major questions about international contributions by the SDF.

It was possible for Japan to send SDF troops to a dangerous area that was in the line of fire, because a virtual safety zone was created under a law.

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The Nagoya High Court designated Baghdad, in which the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) carried out operations, as a combat zone. Trench mortars were fired at the SDF camp, and casualties were caused even among Dutch troops who were responsible for maintaining security in that area. House of Representatives member Masahiko Sato, who headed the first Iraq reconstruction-assistance group of the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF), commented: "We felt we were engaging in actual combat, unlike past overseas activities by the SDF."

A government source said: "ASDF and GSDF members increased their experience." But many of those dispatched were frustrated. Strict restrictions were being imposed on the use of weapons. Sato said: "We were conducting operations under a system in which we cannot take any action even if our group member is shot or even if a UN member near us is attacked."

The government looked into the possibility of dispatching GSDF transport helicopters and ASDF cargo planes to Afghanistan in the process of studying a withdrawal of ASDF from Iraq. The studies were in response to the shift of priority by the U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member countries from Iraq to Afghanistan. The GSDF, however, remained cautious, with a senior member saying: "Afghanistan is more dangerous than Iraq." When the Defense Agency was upgraded to the status of full ministry status, the government designated international contributions as a main mission of the SDF. What SDF troops experienced in Iraq has not been overviewed, and prospects for future SDF operations are nowhere in sight.

Diet debate on a permanent law to send SDF troops overseas has been up in the air as a result of repeated changes in the post of prime minister.

(2) Editorial: Japan should deepen security partnership with Australia

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Full)  
December 19, 2008

Australia is an important partner of Japan in the Asia-Pacific region. Since last year, Japan and Australia have developed their strategic security cooperation. We hope that the two countries will further deepen this cooperation.

The Japanese and Australian governments held a second round of consultations between their foreign and defense ministers in Tokyo. In this two-plus-two ministerial meeting, the two governments agreed to expand multilateral cooperation involving Japan, the United States, Australia, and other countries in the region, in addition to bilateral defense cooperation between Japan and Australia.

The Japan-Australia two-plus-two ministerial started on the basis of a bilateral joint declaration on security in March last year. In September last year, the two countries formulated an action plan to shape the joint declaration.

In Asia, there are still security concerns to both Japan and Australia. North Korea is developing nuclear weapons and missiles, and China is growing into a military power.

Japan and Australia should cooperate in a wide range of areas,

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including emergency humanitarian assistance for disaster relief operations, international terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, drugs, and money laundering. It is important that the two countries work together in the various areas and build a relationship of mutual trust.

When it comes to joint training for disaster relief activities, Japan and Australia should not only conduct bilateral drills but also should go ahead with multilateral ones involving the United States and Southeast Asian countries. That will be more effective.

Japan and Australia are both allied with the United States. A stronger partnership between Japan and Australia will complement the alliance between Japan and the United States and will also make it even more rock-solid.

In the two-plus-two ministerial, Japan and Australia also decided to start discussing a legal framework for information security along with their pooling of security intelligence information. This is a new initiative.

If Japan and Australia can reach an effective agreement, Japan may consider entering into a similar pact with other countries.

It is also important that the Self-Defense Forces and Australian forces promote defense exchanges at various levels and expand their cooperation in such areas as logistics for international peace cooperation.

The Australian forces, which have 51,000 troops, have sent a total of 3,800 troops overseas, including 1,000 each in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, the SDF has about 250,000-strong troops. However, Japan has only several hundred troops on overseas missions, including vessels in the Indian Ocean. Australia is outstandingly proactive in international activities, even though it is less threatened.

The SDF, if it expands its international activities from now on, should have more opportunities to cooperate with Australian troops in third countries.

Australian Prime Minister Rudd was a diplomat in his career, and he speaks Chinese. When he came into office in December last year, he was believed to weigh China in his foreign policy. However, he has been taking a realistic policy that attaches importance to relations with the United States and Japan, though not so much like former Prime Minister Howard.

Diplomacy is also a game for how to gain more friends in the international arena. Australia is enthusiastic about security cooperation, and we hope that Japan will build a stable relationship with Australia.

(3) Interview with commander Wiercinski on first anniversary of establishment of forward-deployed command -- Focus is on Japan;

relationship with GSDF is good

ASAHI, Kanagawa Edition (Page 28) (Full)  
December 18, 2008

Tomomi Oshima, Mitsuo Sekine

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Maj. Gen. Francis Wiercinski, commander of the U.S. Army I Corps forward-deployed command at Camp Zama (Zama, Sagami-hara) who is concurrently Commanding General of U.S. Army Japan, gave an interview to the Asahi Shimbun on December 17 ahead of the command's first anniversary on December 19. Commander Wiercinski emphatically said: "The focus of our mission is on the security of Japan. We are a different organization from the main force that will be deployed to the Middle East."

I Corps, headquartered at Fort Lewis, Washington, is responsible for the Asia-Pacific. The main force will be deployed to Iraq next year. An anti-base group and others have taken deep interest in the relationship between this and the forward-deployed command, set up at Camp Zama as a symbol of the realignment of U.S. Forces Japan, in relation to the Far East clause of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty.

Commander Wiercinski gave the interview at the command center housing a dozen or so personal computers and other communications equipment. He explained: "This is the forward-deployed command. There are no tanks here. We are working to make the center a venue for operational command, control and communications. We are planning to train the staff personnel for about one year."

He went to explain: "The forward-deployed command is a different organization from the main force that will be deployed to Iraq. Our ultimate objective is to join Yama Sakura (Japan-U.S. joint on-the-map command post exercise), and we will conduct exercises for that. At present, the relationship with the Self-Defense Force is very good."

The plan is to train the personnel as operators at first and then to move onto group training. Once the Ground Self-Defense Force Central Readiness Force is relocated to Zama, seats will be set up for SDF personnel to share command and control duties, according to the commander.

Regarding the relocation of the main unit of I Corps to Zama, Maj. Gen. Wiercinski also said: "I Corps has thousands of troops, so in terms of number, it is not possible to relocate them all to Zama," adding, "Several main members might come, but nothing is decided at present."

About a future plan on the size of the forward-deployed command that has grown from 30 personnel to 70-75, Commander Wiercinski said: "At present, there is no schedule to increase the staff. The U.S. Army's top priority is the war on terror in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although the number of personnel at the forward-deployed command changes depending on that, but the size will not exceed 300, as was agreed upon between the United States and Japan."

(4) Obama's Asia policy may incline toward China, while relations with Japan could become icy

SANKEI (Page 8) (Full)  
December 17, 2008

Although President-elect Barack Obama is in favor of a big government and inclines toward liberalism in carrying out domestic policies, he is a cool pragmatist in the diplomatic field. Obama is expected to become a calculating leader with excellent planning ability.

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The Japanese Embassy to the U.S. and other institutes have stepped

up efforts to figure out what views the Japanese policy team of the Obama administration has of Japan and Asia.

The Embassy held a Japan-U.S. strategic conference to discuss future options for the Japan-U.S. alliance at a hotel in Washington in October, just before the presidential election, inviting 20 experts from Japan and the U.S.

Ambassador to the U.S. Ichiro Fujisaki invited experts from the U.S. and also Japan, but his aim was to find out the incoming administration's views toward Japan and Asia. Discussion was focused on: (1) bilateral cooperation; (2) global issues; and (3) future options for the Japan-U.S. alliance.

Kurt Campbell, former deputy assistant secretary of defense, came late in the morning session. Campbell said: "I had been called in by Obama," according to informed sources. Although observers thought Campbell's entry in the Obama administration would be difficult because he supported another candidate in the presidential campaign, the situation seems to have changed.

According to Campbell and Jeffrey Bader, who served as China desk director in the State Department under the Clinton administration, the Japan-U.S. alliance will also be the bedrock of Washington's diplomacy under the Obama administration, but if Japan is unwilling to contribute according to its position, relations between the two countries could deteriorate.

Obama has said: "The focus of attention in the war on terror should be on Afghanistan and Pakistan." He is expected to ask Japan to offer other assistance than the Maritime Self-Defense Force's (MSDF) refueling operation in the Indian Ocean.

Among the SDF troops dispatched to southern Iraq, none was killed, but in Afghanistan, it is difficult to find a non-combat zone. Some members of the German unit carrying out activities in a considerably peaceful region in the northern part of Afghanistan were killed or injured. If Ground Self-Defense Force troops are dispatched to that nation, it is inconceivable that every member will be able to return home uninjured.

There is an option of dispatching Japanese P3C patrol planes to the Indian Ocean to provide information and also as measures to eliminate pirates in waters off Somalia. Information supplement is expected to contribute more than the refueling service to strengthening the alliance.

There is also an idea of sending MSDF vessels to protect Japanese tankers from pirates. If Coast Guard officers are onboard the ships, the issue of the right to collective self-defense will not be created. Japan depends on the Middle East for 90 PERCENT of domestic oil demand. Oil there is shipped to Japan through waters off Somalia.

Afraid of opposition from the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), the government has yet to respond to the U.S. military's request that Japan dispatch P3C planes to the Indian Ocean. This request should be in line with the DPJ's policy of giving priority to the United Nations, because the UN Security Council has extended its resolution authorizing anti-piracy operations.

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In view of its pragmatist bent, the Obama administration might turn away from Japan if Japan remains unresponsive toward such requests, complaining that Japan has not fulfilled the necessary conditions it should fulfill as an ally.

The U.S. could ask China to perform the role it asked Japan to play. That would be a nightmare for Japan. Some voiced this apprehension when the MSDF withdrew from the Indian Ocean last year with the expiration of the antiterrorism special measures law. This case did not occur because there are hardliners toward China in the Bush administration. Nobody can tell what will happen once the Obama administration is inaugurated.

Obama diplomacy will give priority not to ideology but to cost and efficiency. The Obama administration is expected to call on its allies through international institutions to act based on the principle of reciprocity. Such nuclear powers as China, Russia and North Korea loom across the Sea of Japan. Once the U.S. joins hands with China on the military front, the Japan-U.S. alliance will lose its meaning.

(5) Editorial: Child porn regulation; No more abuse of children

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)  
December 19, 2008

There is a growing call for revising regulations on child porn and Internet images depicting sexually exploited and abused children.

The Third World Congress against Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents was held last month in Rio de Janeiro, hosted by the Brazilian government and UNICEF. Delegates from 40 countries and non-governmental organizations (NGO) compiled a strict action program that regulates simple possession of child porn, viewing such and materials, such as manga and anime depicting explicit images of sexually abused children. In Japan, the simple possession of child porn and materials depicting such for personal viewing are not punishable. The delay in Japan's approach was visible at the congress.

Japan at its first conference held in Stockholm in 1996 came under fire for sending tourists for child prostitution to Southeast Asia. In response to the criticism, Japan in 1999 enacted the Law for Punishing Acts related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. It was also pointed out recently that among the G-8 nations, Japan and Russia do not ban simple possession of child porn and are major suppliers of such.

Regulations must be set in a cautious manner so as not to threaten the constitutionally-guaranteed freedom of expression. There is a flood of child porn, many of which depict children being sexually abused -- something that should be called evidence of crimes. Since it is difficult to determine the age of victims, the date when those pictures were taken and confirm their identity, police investigations are not keeping up with the actual situation. We absolutely must not overlook the serious abuse of human rights involving children.

Many children were forced to become photographic subjects or victimized, as they were unable to distinguish between right and wrong. Photos taken are instantaneously distributed throughout the

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world with the use of file-swapping software. It is impossible to retract distributed images. Those images continue to do harm indefinitely. It is intolerable to think that the victims' mental trauma will amplify as they grow older. The damage has become far more serious, compared with the time when there was not the Internet. Every single citizen should be aware that conventional regulations are not effective.

A nonpartisan group of lawmakers had planned to draft an amendment to the Law for Punishing Acts related to Child Prostitution and Child Pornography with the possibility of making simple possession of child porn punishable. However, due in part to the divided Diet, discussions on the issue has yet to be deepened. Based on the outcome of the global conference, both the ruling and opposition parties should confer on the matter immediately and make the possession and collection of child porn punishable, after working out requirements in precise terms so as not to let the police overuse their authority.

Police authorities must strengthen control of child porn. They have asked Internet providers to eliminate images of children being sexually exploited or blocked the inflow of such images from abroad. However, we must say that such an approach is lukewarm. There are many cases that can be punished under the existing law, including the possession of child porn with the aim of providing them. We want police authorities to conduct investigation aggressively so as to

prevent the victimization of children from spreading further.

ZUMWALT